

CHAPTER 5

Decline from a Rustic Ideal, 1944-1995

One of the most persistent, oldest, and most basic myths in all of western thought is that of a golden age. It is where human endeavors attained such heights that they were considered worthy of emulation, or at least remembrance, in a present blemished by imperfection.¹ The mountainous and picturesque district of Arcadia furnished the mythic setting in classical Greece for such an age, as an abode of a simple, pastoral people dwelling in rural happiness. Landscape gardens of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought to emulate both the idyllic and heroic, though they were just as much an expression of power over nature and people. The importance of these gardens to public parks of the twentieth century, especially sites like Oregon Caves National Monument, is as a form where evolving perceptions of nature manifested themselves in a number of persistent design principles. Although the historical development of landscape gardens is a complex subject and one open to multiple interpretations, these places could be both didactic and scenic, yet they also made an overt connection between nature and personal liberty in the minds of those who created them. The best creations evoked what some called the "genius of the place," by bringing forth the emblematic or "iconic" qualities associated with each site. By responding to what nature dictated, landscapes derived from an Arcadian vision might achieve unity and harmony with circulation systems,

structures, and other features built from native materials at the appropriate scale.

If the ideal of subordinating facilities by integrating them into the larger scene in American parks enjoyed a golden age, especially where landscapes were thought to allow for contact with the sublime, it had to have been during the 1930s. The so-called “rustic architecture” reigned supreme in national parks, state parks, and on many national forests of the period because it best enhanced the *genius loci* while labor and materials remained exceptionally inexpensive. Both the Forest Service and Park Service responded to an infusion of funding for infrastructure by expanding upon attempts made in the 1920s to use rustic architecture in areas they allocated for intensive recreational use. The onset of American involvement in World War II resulted in dramatically reduced budgets for recreational developments planned by both agencies, as well as the disappearance of Depression-era work relief programs like the CCC. Infrastructure needs at places like Oregon Caves had to thus stay on hold during most of the 1940s, while the few remaining landscape architects and engineers in the NPS could do little more than revise their plans and funding proposals for projects that too often remained on the shelf.

The NPS faced higher construction costs in the postwar world, something which reinforced a national trend toward “modern” design emphasizing function over form. In contrast to rustic architecture, it largely dispensed with elements or details aimed at unifying developments under one “theme” or design treatment aimed at expressing a park’s individuality. Some advocates of rustic architecture had, by 1952, decried its modernistic rival as mediocre and symptomatic of decline from an ideal befitting the national parks and monuments.² Nevertheless, more standardized and modernistic designs dominated structures and facilities in the aftermath of World War II, especially once appropriations aimed at building up park infrastructure began to increase significantly in 1954. With the advent of a ten year program dubbed “Mission 66” (so named because of the development needed to support rising visitation in the parks, with the fiftieth anniversary of the NPS in 1966 serving as the program’s sunset), some in the agency saw another golden age. Many of the same landscape architects who had directed the implementation of CCC projects oversaw Mission 66, but far more of the design and construction was contracted than had been the case two decades earlier. Once materials and

labor costs had been driven upward by a booming postwar economy, rustic architecture's days as the dominant paradigm in the NPS were numbered because of it being both expensive and difficult to build.³

Even as the increased complexity of design and construction in the parks made both functions virtually the sole province of contractors by the 1970s, rustic architecture and its varied expressions in the parks four decades earlier acquired a new cachet. Three NPS staff members stationed in San Francisco surveyed structures located in the western parks as part of meeting the agency's responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. They produced a discussion paper that made rustic architecture significant to the history of national parks in the twentieth century, and thus furnished a precursor to more expansive studies of NPS landscape design during the interwar period.⁴ Not only did the number of listings on the National Register of Historic Places for these parks rise dramatically over the ensuing decade, but the authors also helped to cast rustic architecture as an antithesis to virtually all park facilities built after 1942. In divorcing postwar development from a continuum of park design that stretched over several centuries, this paper and the studies that followed it ignored what the architects of Mission 66 carried with them from the 1930s. None of them addressed the fact that master plans (which, according to these studies, furnished the epitome for all park development) had become far more detailed by the 1950s than at any time previously.⁵

Used initially to justify the appropriations needed to carry out new projects, as well as repairs to timeworn park facilities, master plans could also help the NPS deflect criticisms from those who accused the agency of overdeveloping the parks during Mission 66.⁶ The full size rolls of drawings interleaved with lists of completed projects from the CCC era eventually gave way to master plans that included problem statements, staffing projections, and the desired conditions (which usually called for additional facilities) needed to serve an ever-increasing number of visitors. Master plans produced by the NPS during the postwar years for many (if not most) of the park units it administered thus called for new facilities to support added staff and expanding operations, often in conjunction with building a visitor center. At Oregon Caves, however, the NPS had to acknowledge that the monument contained virtually no suitable sites to expand park operations if the agency

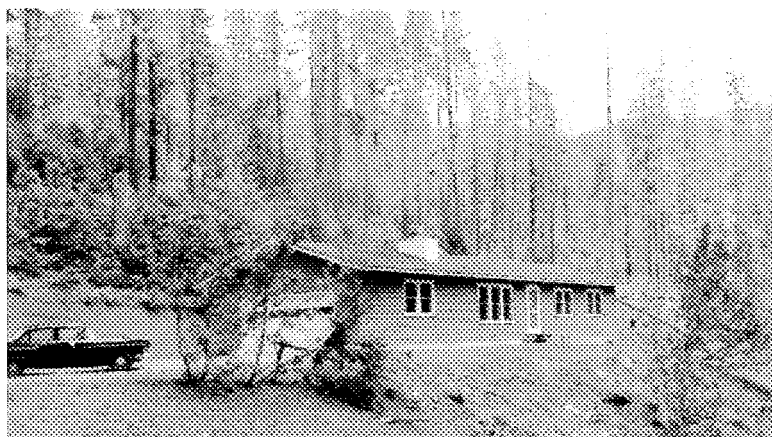


FIGURE 64. Lake Creek residence, 1960. (NPS photo by James Bainbridge, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

did nothing to fundamentally alter its relationship with the concessionaire. As matters stood, the company signed a succession of three 15 year contracts starting in 1940 which allowed it to conduct cave tours as well as operate the facilities that Lium had designed and built from 1926 to 1942. The monument thus gave the appearance of standing still while the postwar world changed around it; projects funded through Mission 66 at Oregon Caves understandably consisted of small undertakings that seemed largely invisible to the bulk of visitors.

Postwar park development

Seemingly content with its largely off-stage oversight role, the NPS accepted the reality that the only places that could be developed for expanding its operations at Oregon Caves lay beyond the monument's boundaries. Officials chose a site located near the highway next to Lake Creek, about 1.5 miles from the entrance sign for a future headquarters in October 1942.⁷ By converting what had been used as a woodlot and garbage dump, the Crater Lake superintendent and the NPS regional director reasoned that a residence area could be erected in addition to a utility building for maintenance purposes. Not even a whiff of funding materialized for this purpose until the NPS negotiated for a special use permit from the Forest Service in June 1958, and even then a special request needed to be made to the director in Washington, D.C. It

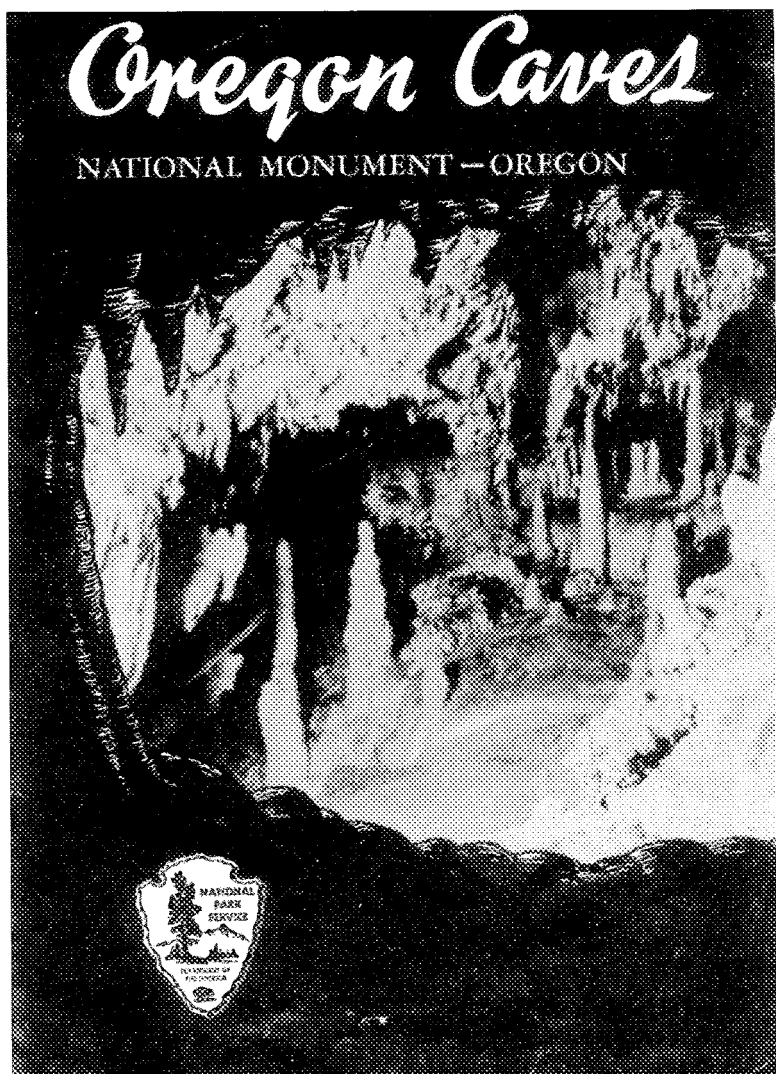


FIGURE 65. Cover of park brochure in 1952. Oregon Caves can claim the distinction of being the first unit in the National Park System to display the new arrowhead logo.

had been triggered by the need to house a newly-funded permanent position at Oregon Caves, where a management assistant was now to be stationed all year instead of having a seasonal ranger there only during the summer.⁸

The existing ranger residence did not allow for effective winter access, so the management assistant had lived in a trailer at the

main parking lot since the fall of 1956. He stayed there until early 1960, when a newly constructed house on the Lake Creek tract was ready to occupy. As a wood frame residence virtually identical to hundreds of others built in national parks during the Mission 66, it had three bedrooms and could be reached by a service road from the Oregon Caves Highway. Additional development at the site, by contrast, included some grading and utility connections that allowed several trailers to be placed below the house for seasonal employees as well as a Quonset hut for storage.

While none of the Lake Creek development could be considered even remotely rustic in appearance, it remained out of view to visitors.⁹ What they might have seen at the monument for two decades after the CCC enrollees departed in 1941 could be categorized as either repair (and sometimes alteration) of existing facilities when absolutely necessary, or improvements justified by annual visitation that climbed from 61,680 in 1941 to 102,940 in 1961 and showed every indication of going still higher. The increase mirrored national trends that stemmed from a booming postwar economy, which provided more people with a middle-class income and expectations of a paid summer vacation. Many people took their families along while visiting national parks and monuments by car during the summer months; the west coast states meanwhile experienced explosive population growth, especially in already established urban areas. The concessionaire continued to advertise the charms of Oregon Caves to growing markets in California in concert with the state highway department's national campaigns to sell Oregon as a destination for vacationers.

Despite all the work aimed at promoting travel to the monument and Oregon in general, limited appropriations for the NPS during the 1940s and early 50s allowed for only a few construction and maintenance projects at Oregon Caves. The largest undertaking involved repairing the main parking lot after the slide of 1942 (something which took a decade to complete due to the complications posed by subsurface drainage problems which reemerged in late 1955), an overhaul of the cave's lighting system in 1946, and installing a new water system in 1950.¹⁰ Having a larger reservoir allowed the concessionaire to comply with fire safety requirements at the Chateau, where automatic sprinklers were now placed throughout most of the building. Concern for visitor safety also supplied the justification for the NPS to remove the rotted wood blocks in the hotel courtyard and pave the area with

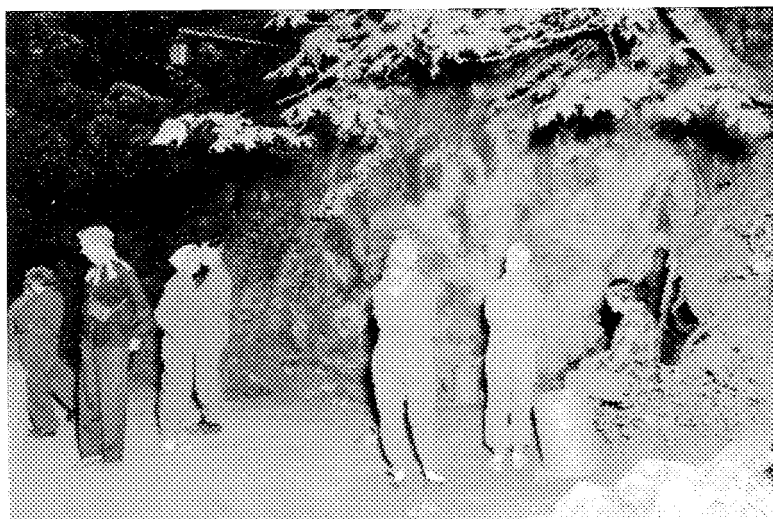


FIGURE 66. Visitors waiting for their tour at the cave entrance, 1957. Note that most wear coveralls. (Photo by Warren Fairbanks, National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection.)

asphalt in 1952, the same year that a crew reintroduced pipe rail at Oregon Caves—for use on the stone steps leading from the campfire circle to the Chalet.¹¹

With their contract set to expire at the end of 1955, the concessionaire responded to postwar visitation shifting even more to the side of day use by increasing the coffee shop's seating capacity from 23 to 45. The company also reacted to a change in Oregon's liquor laws in 1954 by converting a portion of the Chateau's dining room into a cocktail lounge.¹² A rebuilt Chalet had, meanwhile, allowed them to put most supporting functions associated with the centerpiece of any visit to Oregon Caves—a tour—in that structure. They sold tickets from a registration booth located there and rented coveralls in an adjoining room until funding from Mission 66 allowed the NPS to change the wet and sometimes muddy conditions along the tour route by paving the trail with asphalt over the winter of 1957-58. Visitors waiting for cave tours also tended to cluster around the Chalet, where a soda fountain and gift shop were located across the breezeway from the registration booth, thus separating these uses from the meals and visitor accommodation provided in the Chateau.

This kind of functional separation seemed to meet with visitor approval and led to the impression among members of groups like

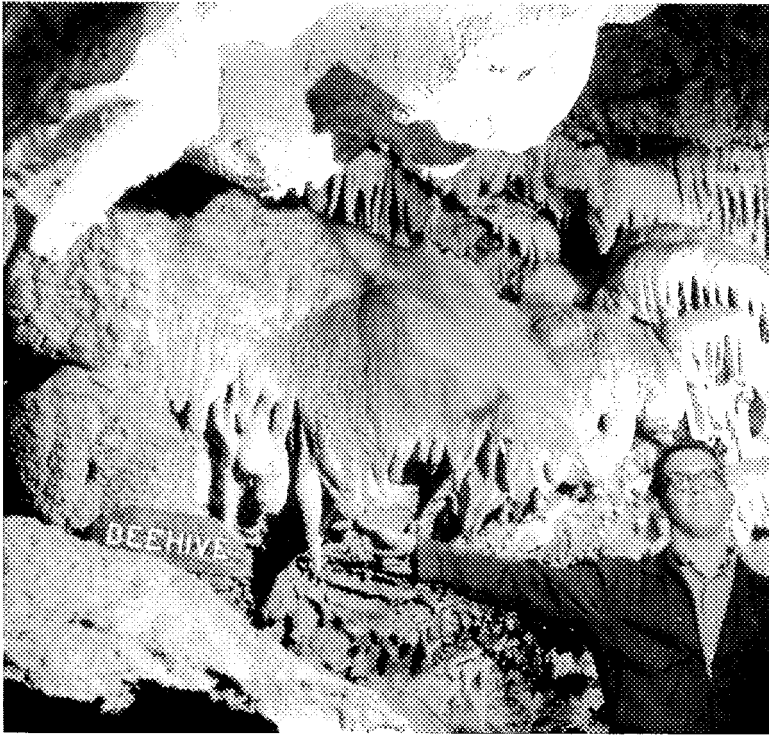


FIGURE 67. Guide at the Beehive Room, 1963. (OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

the National Parks Association and the National Speleological Society that the monument was “ideal” for being under the care of a concessionaire.¹³ A shortage of space near the cave entrance relegated the NPS presence at the monument to a peripheral one, but the only apparent change which occurred during Mission 66 consisted of a prefabricated office brought to the main parking lot from Crater Lake, then placed across from the “reception center” in 1964. No one seemed to notice that the most conspicuous part of NPS development which in many ways characterized Mission 66—a visitor center—had not even been requested (much less programmed) for the monument.

The company’s grip on central position at Oregon Caves remained firm, though its dominance over what visitors experienced waned ever so slightly after Rowley’s retirement in 1954. Guides still gave what amounted to a Rowley tour after that time, though its focus on mystery and mirth was influenced somewhat by a manual compiled by NPS staff at Crater Lake containing sci-

entific information about cave formation.¹⁴ With the former head guide often on site each summer until his death in 1964, all the NPS seemed to do was gently encourage the company to pursue a more thematic approach to tours, though most of the guides persisted with a scripted progression through the cave where many of the highlighted formations seemed to evoke images grounded in caricature.¹⁵ The single most important NPS contribution to visitor understanding of the cave during this period consisted of a booklet aimed at providing a more scientific view of the cave. Written over one winter by NPS management assistant Roger Contor, it was then published in 1963 by the nonprofit cooperating association serving Oregon Caves and Crater Lake.¹⁵

Despite having limited power or will to alter the content of tours, the NPS nevertheless committed some funding to the cave beginning in 1956, when the lighting system was again overhauled. Lights became more reliable, but constant illumination allowed "fern gardens" and algae to become established near many of the lamps. Paving the tour route a year or so later came with some long-term impacts, in that the asphalt could leach and change water chemistry, but one realigned section of trail went through a rimstone dam called the "Atlantic Ocean" and destroyed much of a feature that took thousands of years to form. Paving continued outside in May and June of 1958 to include the full length of a widened exit trail. Over the next three years related undertakings included installation of new lights along the trail, erection of pipe railing along its margin in spots where a safety barrier seemed to be needed and construction of stone pylons to support wooden benches outside the exit tunnel.¹⁷ Concurrent with the completed exit trail project was the installation of three gates. These came in response to problems caused by uncontrolled access to the cave by company employees and reports of vandalism that the NPS began to note in 1955, though this step was taken almost 40 years after the supervisor of the Siskiyou National Forest first recommended such devices.¹⁸

Changes in the forest

The gates did not correct problems caused by changes in airflow through the cave that became more apparent with the exit tunnel's completion more than a quarter century earlier. In the early 1960s, however, the NPS paid more attention to a dwarf mistletoe



FIGURE 68. Patterson photo of timber stands near the highway to Oregon Caves. (OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

infestation in the surrounding forest. It reached such proportions by 1962 that the NPS contracted for the removal of some trees behind the Chalet, thereby altering what had once been an unbroken canopy dominated by large Douglas-fir.¹⁹ That year the Forest Service accepted bids for three timber sale units located on Cave Creek just below the monument with the reasoning that trees killed by an insect outbreak should be salvaged. Logging of national forest land around Oregon Caves had since commenced on a commercial (rather than salvage) basis, with visual evidence of clear cutting methods becoming increasingly evident to visitors who paused at vista points on the monument's trail system. Timber sales began on Grayback Mountain in 1958 and continued in the vicinity of the monument thereafter, with one on Lake Mountain and another in upper Sucker Creek several years later.²⁰

A stepped-up Forest Service timber production program worked to change the landscape around Oregon Caves over the next two decades, as it did on other national forests in the Pacific Northwest. The somewhat abrupt change from "custodial" management by the agency to one dominated by timber production started during the late 1940s, at a time when postwar demand for lumber remained high in the face of a steadily decreasing supply of old-growth trees still standing on private land.²¹ Comparatively recent technological advances like chainsaws and tractors that could haul logs from steep ground made the previously inaccessi-



FIGURE 69. Mud and debris in the Chalet breezeway, December 1964. The man at left is NPS landscape architect Paul Fritz. (OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

ble “mountains of timber” (as photographer Frank Patterson titled one photo taken near Oregon Caves in the 1920s) commercially viable when subsidized by the Forest Service contracting to build more access roads. Consequently, these stands could now be reached from a network of roads which made truck logging triumphant over previous methods (such as railroads or streams) of delivering timber to mills located in the Illinois Valley or even further afield.²²

At the national level, building roads in the national forests far outstripped other Forest Service program areas like grazing or recreation for more than two decades beginning in 1955. Agency

officials gave the justification that a subsidized network of roads (as opposed to one funded solely from the value of timber that could be accessed from it) allowed for a variety of future uses. The increased number of roads threading the Siskiyou National Forest mirrored this trend, one that accelerated during the 1960s—a time when budget allocations for the program areas of timber and recreation in all of the national forests stood roughly equal. Recreation received its initial boost starting in 1957, one intended to “double camping and picnicking facilities in the national forests within the next five years,” partly to avert an incursion by the NPS on lands under Forest Service administration.²³ The Forest Service thus launched “Operation Outdoors” to counter “Mission 66,” though its effect on the Siskiyou National Forest and the Illinois Valley Ranger District in particular were not felt until 1964. In the meantime, several timber sales had taken place in the vicinity of Oregon Caves (like the one near Bigelow Lakes) which showed how quickly the forest’s road network had grown.

The expanding network opened so much previously inaccessible country for logging that the Forest Service felt that it had to withdraw several sites near the monument from timber production once the Bureau of Reclamation proposed flooding a portion of the Sucker Creek drainage for an irrigation dam in 1962.²⁴ Flooding of Sucker Creek meant the inundation of Grayback Campground, so the Forest Service withdrew sites on the Illinois Valley Ranger District that it might develop as campgrounds to replace the sites to be lost at Grayback.²⁵ After making three small withdrawals on the Illinois Valley district in December 1963, the Forest Service added another in June 1965 but ended up developing only one area.²⁶ Contractors built Cave Creek Campground, a development below milepost 16 on the Oregon Caves Highway, in 1964. The Forest Service floated the idea of enlarging both of the Bigelow Lakes for recreational purposes as late as 1969, but settled for revamping Grayback Campground once support for the irrigation dam had dissipated.²⁷

Sucker Creek flooded, though only temporarily, in December 1964 when logs and debris choked the stream near Grayback Campground. Crews salvaged much of the pile containing criss-crossed trees heaped together like a jackstraw, with the flood doing little damage to the campground.²⁸ This could not be said about several buildings at Oregon Caves, where a plug of debris had traveled down the usually dry “gulch,” then poured through the

Chalet's breezeway and into the Chateau. Some 3,500 cubic yards of material (which included seventeen trees) hit the hotel with such force that a portion of the building had slipped from its concrete foundation. Company management feared a total loss at first, but Lium (at the time 81 years old) arrived on the scene to direct repair efforts so that the Chateau could open for the summer of 1965.²⁹

Although mud and debris had filled three of the six floors in the hotel, it emerged virtually intact from the flood. The plug had so damaged the dining area that its maple floor had to be covered by carpet, but the most significant postwar change in the Chateau had occurred more than six years earlier. Winter snow loads had weakened the wooden porches, necessitating their removal in 1958. Also missing from an overnight stay by that time was the musical serenade that some guests once enjoyed from the porches. New federal labor standards issued in 1950 dictated that the musicians as concession employees had to be paid for their performances, and in some cases at an overtime rate, so the company discontinued the live entertainment.³⁰

More visitors and new constituents

Annual visitation at Oregon Caves swelled to more than 150,000 in 1966 and almost crossed the 200,000 mark six years later, so the company's operation remained profitable. With commercial overnight capacity (at the Chateau and cabins) limited to what it had been before World War II, virtually all the growth in postwar visitation came through greater day use of the monument. With more visitors waiting near the Chalet for their cave tour to commence, the concessionaire responded by expanding the space allocated to their gift shop in 1972. This move came at the expense of an "employee's parlor" shown on Lium's plan for the Chalet, but the company simply relocated this function (a commons room) within an addition to their Guide Dormitory which they built at the same time. Despite all the signs of continued profitability at Oregon Caves during the early and middle 1970s, however, company stockholders voted to sell their shares to the Canteen Company of Oregon just after Canteen made a similar deal at Crater Lake.³¹

With the sale to Canteen due to become finalized by September 1977, the Oregon Cavemen made their final visit to



FIGURE 70. Cavemen welcoming the Cave Junction Outlaws to Grants Pass, about 1950. (Photo courtesy of the Josephine County Historical Society.)

“open” the monument in May of that year, an annual event timed to correspond with the company starting to rent rooms in the Chateau each summer. Although they erected a giant statue of a caveman near the main freeway exit in Grants Pass as recently as 1972, the booster group’s membership had begun to wane even before the sale to Canteen five years later. The organization became even more of a memory than an active force in promoting Josephine County during the 1980s (the Boatnik festivities on Memorial Day weekend had virtually upstaged them in Grants Pass by that time), though a number of businesses retained the Caveman name—as did its largest high school.³²

These entities served as vestiges of the historic tie between Oregon Caves and Grants Pass, but the town had grown from about 6,000 in 1922 to more than 15,000 sixty years later. Along the way it diversified an economy initially dependent upon primary production (agriculture, lumber, and mining) as well as the growing sector of tourists drawn to Oregon Caves, a scenic coastline, and the redwoods.³³ As the service economy expanded in Grants Pass over the intervening decades, so did tourism in southwest Oregon. It also dispersed greater numbers of people along the lower Rogue River (which served as the setting for Boatniks) so

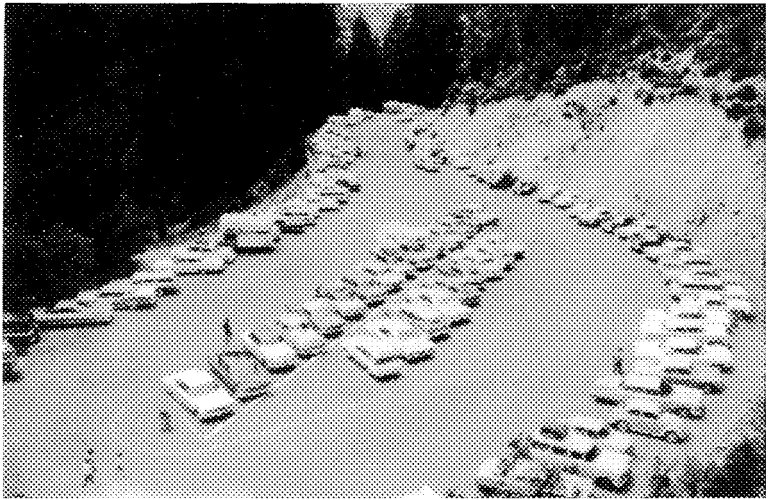


FIGURE 71. The monument's main parking area, July 1964. (NPS photo by R.H. Viklund, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

that increasing numbers of rafts and jet boats plied the water while hikers and fishermen could be found on the banks. Funding for recreational development on the national forests that came through Operation Outdoors and the programs that followed it expanded the number of facilities like campgrounds, picnic sites, and trails in the Siskiyou National Forest as well as on other public lands that bordered the Rogue and Illinois rivers, so that Oregon Caves could no longer be considered the only visitor attraction in Josephine County that might appeal to non-residents. The monument still drew the largest day use numbers of any *single* site, even as annual visitation at Oregon Caves fell from 181,000 in 1977 to just 115,000 five years later.

Like other predominately day use park areas in the Pacific Northwest at the time, peak visitation at the monument in July and August far outstripped other times of the year. With demand at its greatest between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. each day, parking at Oregon Caves remained at a premium through much of the summer and could sometimes involve a protracted wait. Even if visitors limited their time to just the cave tour (and these were scheduled to start every 15 minutes), waiting times could be as long as three hours for some who arrived at the monument during peak hours in mid-summer.³⁴ The bottleneck at the main parking lot had become egregious enough by 1978 for the NPS to request funds for land acquisition in Cave Junction, ostensibly to build an

"Oregon Caves Information Center" aimed at advising motorists during busy periods on what might lie twenty miles ahead.³⁵

Cave Junction had been home to the concessionaire's kiosk promoting Oregon Caves since the close of World War II. This structure sat at the junction of highways 199 and 46, but lacked parking for trailers and other vehicles that were not recommended to go beyond Grayback Campground. The site authorized for an information center under legislation passed by Congress in 1978 fronted the south side of the Caves Highway, a hundred yards or so from its intersection with the Redwood Highway. A deconsecrated church there served as both the chamber of commerce office and "information center" for the time being while NPS staff at Oregon Caves awaited funds for building a new structure in its place, one that might hold exhibits like those of a NPS visitor center.

By the time construction of a modern, rather than rustic, center finally began in 1990, the focus on Oregon Caves had shifted to the Illinois Valley. Funding for the center came from the Oregon Lottery and was channeled through the Forest Service which oversaw construction of the facility. The Forest Service staffed it according to the terms of a partnership agreement among federal agencies and the town of Cave Junction. The NPS finally obtained a large parking lot in addition to a sales outlet for its nonprofit cooperating association (which formerly had to operate from the monument's "reception center"), but the agency lacked any real presence at the Illinois Valley Visitor Center. Annual visitation at the monument had fallen to less than 100,000 by the early 1990s largely due to an increasing number of competing attractions in southwest Oregon and a substantial hike in the price of tickets for cave tours. Concern over a shortfall of parking at Oregon Caves had thus lessened, as had the emphasis on informing visitors about conditions twenty miles away from Cave Junction. These justifications for building a facility in town had long since been superseded by key signatories to the partnership agreement expressing their desire that the center serve as a vehicle for economic development by promoting tourism throughout the valley.

If the visitor center in Cave Junction represented how the older public-private partnership to develop Oregon Caves had expanded its geographic scope, this took place at a time when many residents of the Illinois Valley were experiencing transition from what had been a timber-based economy for more than four



FIGURE 72. A small lumber mill in the Illinois Valley, 1970s. (OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

decades. Cave Junction became the second incorporated town in Josephine County during 1948, but the growth and infrastructure necessary to do this had largely been fueled by logging on nearby private lands which fed the operation of nearly fifty sawmills in the Illinois Valley that year.³⁶ Consolidation of milling capacity took place during the 1950s due to overproduction and other reasons, so that many “gyppos” (independent logging operations) washed out of the marketplace, to be replaced by larger and more capital-intensive outfits as timber supply began to shrink. Agriculture in the Illinois Valley persisted, but the service economy expanded during the 1960s and 70s to become the county’s most important economic sector by the time Cave Junction’s population initially exceeded 1,000 residents in 1980.

Tourism remained the most conspicuous part of the service economy, with Oregon Caves at the forefront, but local leaders wanted the visitor center to cast a wider net in promoting the valley’s attractions. However, most of the more recently established publicly owned stopping points within the Redwood Highway corridor (such as the county park on Lake Selmac, Illinois River State Park, or the Rough and Ready botanical wayside) only seemed to attract local residents or those that lived no further away than the Rogue Valley.³⁷ An upsurge in the popularity of primitive recreation on roadless lands located away from the major road corridors of Josephine County followed a national trend beginning in the mid 1970s, so that travel to areas like Eight Dollar Mountain, Babyfoot Lake and the rugged Kalmiopsis Wilderness increased

among botanists, day hikers, and backpackers.

Activists who promoted the need for more areas of national forest off limits to roads and logging fueled the interest in this type of recreation, so that southwest Oregon (and Josephine County in particular) featured prominently in political battles over extending the protections granted by the Wilderness Act passed by Congress in 1964.³⁸ They prevailed on two occasions, marked by passage of bills creating or expanding the legally designated wilderness on federal lands of southwest Oregon in 1978 and 1984.³⁹ Oregon Caves and its immediate surroundings rarely featured in the wilderness debates, mainly because what little roadless land that could be considered for inclusion under the criteria established by the Wilderness Act had been reduced by timber sales and the road network to well under the 5,000 acre minimum, though a few advocates tried to play up the possibility of the monument serving as a launch point for hiking trips to the Red Buttes area on the Oregon/California border.

Although the debate over which federal lands should remain protected from logging or other activities that could hamper the qualities associated with legally designated wilderness areas rarely touched Oregon Caves, it is worth noting that some accessible sections of the cave remained unexplored until the first attempts at mapping its extent took place in 1959. Years of subsequent effort by caving groups, however, reached a milestone in 1975, with publication of the first map showing virtually all passages as well as the location of the cave's major features.⁴⁰ The map showed that visitors saw roughly one-third of the cave system along the prescribed tour route, though what they experienced could hardly be called a subterranean wilderness. The NPS nevertheless sought a more "natural" cave during this period, if only by installing fluorescent lighting in 1975 to combat algae growth and the presence of ferns encouraged by incandescent bulbs located along the route. (Fluorescent tubes made the problem even worse by reducing the drying effect of the warmer incandescent bulbs, but also compounded the growth by illuminating more sections of the cave). The colored lights that once produced "Dante's Inferno" within the Ghost Room meanwhile disappeared, though the blue and red lights in Paradise Lost persisted for another few years. Other projects, however, served to reinforce the status quo as crews repaved the tour route in 1973 and then replaced steel stairways in the cave over the following year.

Attempts to recast the monument

The most dramatic change in what visitors experienced on the tour began in 1985, when volunteers initially organized by concession manager Chas Davis removed rubble from the entrance of one chamber. Over the next few years they re-exposed passages obscured by the “improvements” made during the 1920s and generated momentum for “cave restoration” to take hold. Building on this success, NPS staff garnered funding to replace the paving with a new surface that did not create the number of negative impacts associated with asphalt. As part of the decade-long makeover, the three gates were replaced to reduce impacts on resident bats. Crews also installed new airlock doors to lessen ice damage near the start of the tour route and airflow created by the exit tunnel. A black light in the Ghost Room, one intended to convey the phosphorescence of draperies and other formations, became symbolic of how the NPS wanted to emphasize cave processes instead of projecting anthropomorphic constructions like cartoon characters or mythic figures on to natural features. Visitors could also see the bones of a prehistoric black bear *in situ*, an exhibit they passed on their way to the exit tunnel. It and pieces of a fossilized jaguar received considerable publicity as paleontological discoveries that could illuminate how old the cave might be.⁴¹

Developing new interpretive devices along the tour route came at a time when the NPS attempted to give science education the preeminent role at the monument in the face of resistance from the concessionaire. Imposing thematic tours that highlighted the process of cave formation through explaining geological precepts nevertheless flew in the face of a view that visitors wanted, one company official expressed it, “strange stories and cool formations.”⁴² This divergence in goals between the NPS and its concessionaire could likely be traced back to the time of Rowley’s retirement in 1954, at which point the chief park naturalist at Crater Lake began conducting a training course for guides. This represented a precursor to formal certification of guides by the NPS beginning in the 1970s, something that indicated their tour possessed some factual basis or at least met minimum standards set for giving an interpretive talk.

The company also opposed bestowing national historic land-

Mapped by members of the Oregon Grotto of the National Speleological Society in cooperation with the National Park Service and the Crater Lake Natural History Association.

CRG Grade 5 survey , 1972, by the Oregon Grotto

Note: Total traverse shown is 2400'. COPYRIGHT, 1974 by the Crater Lake Natural History Association.

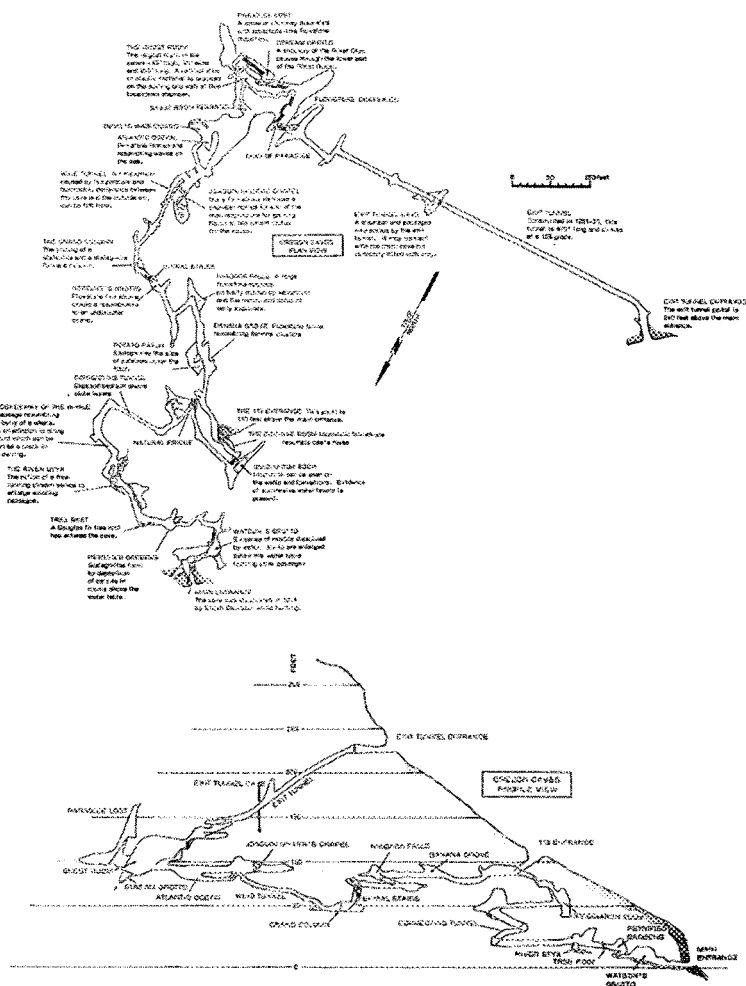


FIGURE 73. Highlighted stops on the tour route by Jim Nieland, 1974.

mark status on the Chateau, fearing that the designation (one that indicates the most significant buildings, sites, and districts in the United States) might hinder its operation. Any changes proposed to the hotel had already become subject to existing review processes conducted by the NPS, ones driven by codes for life safety and sanitation, but also by the standards of historic preservation. Using his authority under the Historic Sites Act of 1935, the Secretary of the Interior named the Chateau a national historic landmark in 1987.⁴³ The NPS subsequently nominated a district which included the hotel but also two other buildings where the company had a possessory interest, the Chalet and Guide Dormitory, to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.⁴⁴ Proposed changes within the district (which also included the Ranger Residence and the “reception center” in addition to designed landscape elements) had previously been subject to an approval process conducted by the NPS, one based on standards developed from regulations following from passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966.

Congress enacted the NHPA in response to a wave of demolition that plagued urban areas in the United States during the 1950s and 60s, so it seemed rather ironic that seven of Lium’s cottages were demolished in March 1988 despite the fact that they met the requirements for listing and even predated the district’s other five contributing structures. Contents from a broken pipe in one of the cottages reached the tour route one day in 1985, so the superintendent at Crater Lake pointed to the threat posed by all of the structures located above the cave and initiated the process required for removing them. It went forward with the company’s concurrence, (mainly because they no longer rented the cottages to visitors) and demolition came once the prescribed documentation effort had been completed as a mitigation measure.⁴⁵ Even with much of its core missing, the district’s contributing structures and adjacent features still displayed enough integrity as an example of rustic architecture to be listed on the National Register, ostensibly as a designed cultural landscape that reflected how Lium and others responded to the monument’s contours and setting to develop the site as a resort.⁴⁶

By attempting to pitch the monument as featuring something more than tours through a show cave, the NPS promoted cave restoration as an important move toward realizing the dream of pristine nature.⁴⁷ To a lesser extent, some staff members in the

agency's cultural resources wing tried to call attention to the historic district as exemplifying a rustic architecture which reached its zenith during the 1930s. They made the interwar period at Oregon Caves and other parks into a kind of golden age, one where the surviving features merited preservation as long as they could be tied to architectural or site plans. Designed components like a utility line or trail segment could be included within the district as long as these fit a rectangular template derived from the National Register's emphasis on establishing distinct boundaries for historic properties. Too often, however, the underground or linear feature that contributed to how a district worked from a functional and sometimes experiential standpoint was omitted because inventory methods had not been developed to fit the models (usually based on design fields like architecture) that worked to translate nominations into listings on the National Register.

This historic district remained separate from the cave largely because the tour route supposedly lacked integrity, or the ability to convey its historic significance. The marble steps placed along the tour route by CCC enrollees, as well as earlier inscriptions left by Thomas Condon and other nineteenth century visitors, were thus not included as contributing features. Such segregation amounted to zoning, a technique long used in urban settings to differentiate uses of land, and since embraced by the NPS in order to direct future development and articulate management direction in park planning documents. This eroded the earlier rustic ideal of unifying material and experiential dimensions that reigned during the 1930s, but a tour judged on its entertainment value had now become less palatable in light of subsequent scientific knowledge about caves.